

about saying you need help. And we shouldn't have an all-or-nothing situation. I mean, it seems to me that the people this country ought to be rewarding are people that are willing to take this level of responsibility, willing to pay something according to their ability to pay, but just shouldn't be asked to bankrupt themselves on the one hand or on the other hand just give up their entire lives. I really, really appreciate what you said. And more importantly, I appreciate what you've done.

**Ms. Garrison.** It may be difficult for you—you need to come spend a couple days in our home, Mr. President, and you can really see what it's like living in the house with the type disabilities that our child has.

**The President.** I wish I could.

**Ms. Garrison.** I wish you could, too. Thanks for having us today.

**The President.** Thank you. I want to thank all of you, Eve and Beth and James and Goldia and Gene and Mary Hammer and Donna Lyttle and Vera Teske and you, Marge. I thank you all.

In a lot of ways you're truly heroic people because you've lived by your values of hard work and commitment to your families. And I hope that your stories as they go out across the country will help us to pass a health care reform bill that will build on a lot of the good services you talked about today, those of you who have them, but make sure there aren't the waiting lists that Marge talked about and make sure that we can actually give some help to people who are trying to help themselves and their loved ones.

We can begin to do this. It will take some time to get it exactly right in America, but we've got to begin now. And that's what our plan does. And you have inspired me to keep fighting for it. I'll guarantee you, this has been a wonderful day. I thank you very much. I wish you well. And we're all in your debt.

Thank you, and goodbye.

## Exchange With Reporters Following the Health Care Teleconference

March 2, 1994

### Health Care Reform

**Q.** Mr. President, what do you think of the polls that show that your health care—going down the drain—you may not be—

**The President.** That's not what they show. One of the polls shows the serious concern level going up. How could it be otherwise? Look at the millions and millions and millions of dollars that have been spent by interest groups to trash the plan, people that don't want to assume any responsibility for their employees, people that don't want to assume any responsibility for providing basic health care, and people that think they can get just a little better deal.

It's no accident—I will say this: We've tried for 60 years to join the ranks of the rest of the world and give everybody good health care in this country, and it's no accident that it hasn't happened. It's because change is difficult and the people who are doing well in the present system devote a lot of money and time to stopping the change.

But I'm still actually pretty optimistic about this because what happened is, every time I get a chance to speak to the American people about it, support goes back up, like it did at the State of the Union. Then we go through a long period of where nothing is happening in the Congress and everybody is kind of maneuvering for position legislatively and we're being attacked. And we don't have as much money to spend as those who are spending money against us on the ads and all that sort of stuff. So these things will happen.

The thing that encourages me is I talk to more and more Members of Congress that seem to have a very practical attitude about this and want to find a way to give everybody health security, some system of guaranteed insurance on health care without taking away the good things that we have now. And that's what we're going to do. And I actually feel, based on my conversations with Members of Congress and the impact that we still get whenever we go out and talk about this specifically, like when we went to Connecticut

NOTE: The teleconference began at 10:36 a.m. The President spoke from the Oval Office at the White House.

and talked about the medicine, a good feeling about it.

There is nothing I can do in the short run to overtake the fact that I don't have as much money to run television ads as the health insurance industry.

**Q.** So you are going to get a plan—you think you will get—

**The President.** Oh, absolutely. I think that Congress will do this. They know it's important. They know it's the responsible thing to do, and I believe we'll get a good plan out of the Congress. But it's going to be—you know, this is a long and painstaking process. The legislative process is just about to begin, and a lot of people get frustrated, and they want results now, and they hear all this stuff in the air. So you're going to see the polls go up and down, but in the end, it's clearly a major concern of the American people, and they want us to do something, and they want to provide health security. And I think we'll get it done.

#### **Japan-U.S. Trade**

**Q.** Mr. President, is the reauthorization of Super 301 a warning shot to the Japanese?

**The President.** First of all, we haven't made a final decision about how exactly to proceed on that. But what we are trying to do is to—since the framework agreement may well not be carried out, we have to figure out what our options are to proceed now. But let's wait and see what we do on that specifically. I wouldn't—warning shot—I don't want to characterize those things. We're trying to move the markets. We're trying to open the market to American products, but to the rest of the world's products and services as well.

#### **Ames Spy Case**

**Q.** Mr. President, all these revelations in the Ames spy case seem to suggest a much more massive penetration of the U.S. intelligence community than earlier had been suggested. How deep did this go? How widespread is the investigation? And how concerned are you about ongoing covert operations that could endanger the lives of U.S. agents and those who work with them?

**The President.** Well, I think what I should say now is that we put a very high priority

on this over the last several months, and we're doing our best to get to the bottom of it. And we will proceed to do that. In the meantime, we're going to do our best to secure Americans who are working to represent their country. But I can't say any more than that now. I think that you can be confident that we are doing what we should be doing to find out everything we need to know.

#### **Middle East Peace Process**

**Q.** Are you somewhat resigned to the fact that it doesn't look like you're going to be able to get Mideast peace talks going anytime soon?

**The President.** No. Mr. Arafat said that he would join the talks here in Washington, but I know he's under a lot of pressure at home, and I understand that. The only thing that I would say to the Palestinians who are pressuring Arafat not to resume talks is that that is the surest way to hand a victory to the madman who killed all the Palestinians in the mosque. Why should they do something that would hand a victory to the extremists on both sides?

But he is under pressure. We are working on it. I talked firstly to Prime Minister Rabin. We've been in touch with Mr. Arafat. I'm hoping to have a conversation with King Hussein today, and I've talked to President Mubarak, and we're all working on this hard. But I think that they want to come back. And I am not resigned to the fact that it won't happen.

**Q.** Do the pressures realistically mean you've got to wait a while? I mean, you had hoped to resume—or to start the talks this week.

**The President.** Well, we'll see. We'll see what the timing is. But I think we can get them back on track. I think Prime Minister Rabin's speech and the steps he's taken were a good beginning, a really good beginning on his part, and we'll just have to see what happens. But again I say, if the peace talks don't get back on track, then we are rewarding the damage and the death wreaked by the extremists. We don't want to do that. We want to keep going. And you know, these ethnic and religious difficulties are very deep and profound, but you just have to keep

working at them. And we got some good news yesterday on Bosnia, and we just keep working at these things and do our best to try to bring them to a successful conclusion.

**Hugh Rodham**

**Q.** Are you supporting Hugh Rodham?

**The President.** What? No, what did you say? I couldn't hear you.

**Q.** Oh, I'm sorry. Are you supporting Hugh Rodham in his campaign?

**The President.** Well, I don't—first, he hasn't filed. And secondly, we don't know if he's got any opposition in the Democratic primary. I'll be out there in the fall helping all the Democrats. But that's a decision for him to make. He's got to make that decision. I can't make it.

**Herschel Friday**

**Q.** Did you want to say something about Herschel Friday, your old staff member?

**The President.** Well, he was a friend of mine, you know, for 30 years. He did remarkable work in my State. I used to make fun of him for flying just back and forth from— to Little Rock. And he lived a very full life, was a good man and a great citizen. And Hillary and I talked about it this morning and our thoughts and our prayers are with Beth and his family.

**Q.** Are you going back there, sir?

**The President.** I don't know. I don't know what the facts are yet. I just heard about it this morning. I actually—right before I went to work early this morning I heard about it.

NOTE: The exchange began at 11:20 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House.

**Proclamation 6652—Save Your Vision Week, 1994**

*March 2, 1994*

*By the President of the United States of America*

**A Proclamation**

Vision is a gift to be treasured. We often take our sight for granted and must be reminded that our eyes require adequate care and attention. At a time when new technologies are revolutionizing medicine, eye

care continues to make dramatic progress. Many diseases or accidents that would have caused permanent blindness just a few decades ago can now be treated, with excellent prospects for full recovery. Eye care professionals learn more about proper eye care every year, discovering new ways to prevent disease and to minimize potential damage to our precious eyesight.

Despite our ever-increasing medical knowledge, however, thousands of Americans still suffer preventable vision loss each year. Proper eye care can significantly reduce the incidence of such needless tragedies, and I encourage all Americans to learn ways to minimize the risks of disease and injury to their eyes.

Having periodic eye examinations is an excellent way to invest in one's long-term health. Preventive eye care is always more efficient, more effective, and less expensive than dealing with an existing disease. A comprehensive eye examination allows an eye care professional the ability to identify a disease in its earliest stages and prescribe the treatment with the best chances for success.

Glaucoma, one of the leading causes of blindness in the United States, if diagnosed early, can be treated quite successfully. Though there are often no early warning symptoms of the disease, an eye care professional can detect the affliction during a regular examination and prescribe eye drops or other simple treatments to control the disease and save the patient's sight. I urge all people at high risk for glaucoma—African Americans over the age of 40 and everyone over the age of 60—to receive an eye examination through dilated pupils at least every two years.

People with diabetes are also at particularly high risk for preventable eye disorders. Such eye disease as diabetic retinopathy, which still blinds many people with diabetes in our Nation, can be stopped if it is diagnosed in time. By receiving an eye examination at least once a year, diabetics can do much to protect their vision.

Children, of course, should receive periodic eye examinations, starting when they are very young. Regular eye care at a tender age can identify otherwise hidden disorders, thus